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New Horizons for Learning: An Interview with Dee Dickinson

by Scott Windham and Dee Dickinson

Dee Dickinson is the founder and chief learning officer of [New Horizons for Learning](#), a nonprofit international education network whose mission is to identify, communicate, and help implement effective teaching and learning strategies. Founded in 1980 and now operating largely through its Web site, New Horizons focuses on outreach and partnerships to apply its resources to educational systems, homes, and other learning environments. For this interview, Dickinson sat down with Scott Windham, an *Innovate* board member.

Scott Windham [SW]: Dee, explain briefly what New Horizons for Learning is and how it functions.

Dee Dickinson [DD]: New Horizons for Learning is a nonprofit international network of educators focused on identifying, synthesizing, communicating, and implementing the most effective ways of teaching and learning at all ages and abilities. The central organizing principle of New Horizons is the use of leading-edge, well-documented research on learning and the development of human capacities. We operate from the belief that the human brain changes structurally and functionally as a result of learning and experience. When educators clearly understand this principle, they can create supportive learning environments in which all students learn more successfully. New Horizons promotes educational strategies to achieve that goal.

[Figure 1](#) shows how the organization functions. Volunteers do most of the work, but we employ a network manager and a senior Web designer. We have an international advisory board and a board of directors; the latter includes heads of major educational organizations in the northwest.

SW: How can educators take advantage of New Horizons' mission and resources?

DD: The New Horizons Web site offers information on a host of topics, including educational strategies. The site is freely available to the public, and most of the materials we post have been written expressly for it. Resources are divided into seven categories:

- [Teaching and Learning Strategies](#) includes practical articles about the most effective ways to facilitate and enhance teaching and learning.
- [Special Needs](#) features national and state regulations, descriptions of specific disabilities or learning challenges, ways to identify and address them, and suggested support systems.
- [Lifelong Learning](#) presents information about special needs in early childhood/parenting, the elementary years, adolescence, higher education, the workplace, and the senior years.
- [Student Voices](#) is a collection of student comments about what works and what does not work for them in education; this section suggests ways to help students use their voices constructively.
- [News from the Neurosciences](#) provides current information about the development and function of the human brain as it is applied to learning, as well as up-to-date research from some of the world's foremost neuroscientists.
- [Transforming Education](#) describes successful methods that are bringing about positive change in schools at state, national, and international levels.
- [Perspectives on the Future](#) offers discussions by recognized futurists about trends affecting the future. It includes information about how educators and parents can prepare students for a changing world.

We suggest that visitors begin with the [About](#) page, which describes our work and philosophy and provides tips for using the site.

New Horizons also publishes an online [quarterly journal](#). The journal focuses on timely educational issues such as learning through the arts, technology in education, multicultural issues, environmental education, and assessment. Each issue includes author contact information, a list of recommended books, links to relevant Web sites and projects, news about special events, and other resources. All issues are [archived](#).

SW: Who contributes to the journal? Does New Horizons publish anything else?